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Middle East Situation Report #17
(As of 1100 EST, 18 January 1984)

LEBANON/SYRIA

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The killing of American University of Beirut President Malcolm Kerr this morning by gunmen claiming to be members of the "Islamic Jihad" appears to bear out reporting of a recent shift in terrorist targets from installations to attacks on individuals with silenced weapons. [REDACTED]

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-- "Islamic Jihad," which also claimed responsibility for kidnapping the Saudi Consul in Beirut yesterday, is probably a nom de guerre used by several Iranian-backed Shia terrorist groups in Lebanon. The "Islamic Jihad" claims the Saudi diplomat will be executed. [REDACTED]

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-- The Syrians are less likely perpetrators than any of the several Iranian-backed radical Shia groups. [REDACTED]

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Iranian officials, who vehemently oppose the Lebanese security plan, may have ordered the attack against President Kerr in the hope of further destabilizing the political situation in Beirut and blocking implementation of the plan. [REDACTED]

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Kerr was the replacement for acting President David Dodge, who was kidnapped in July 1982 and held for a time in Iran before being released, reportedly at the request of Rifaat al-Assad, brother of the Syrian president. [REDACTED]

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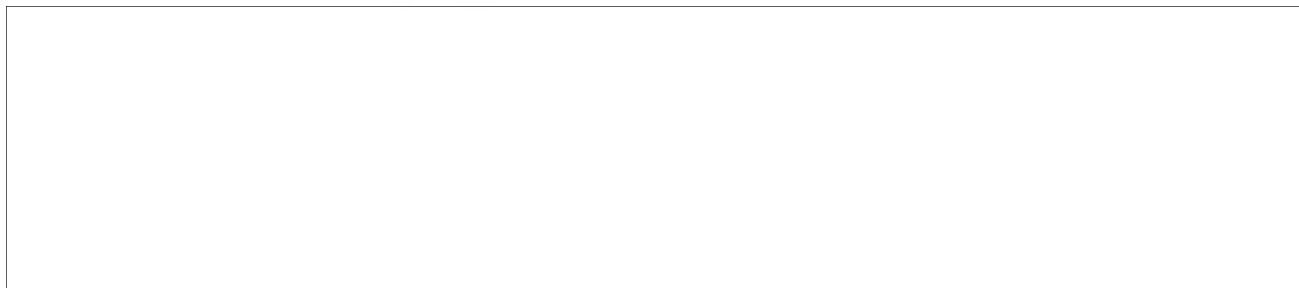
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PERSIAN GULF

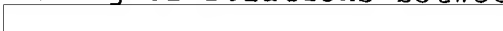
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Iranian Assembly Speaker Hashemi-Rafsanjani ridiculed the USSR yesterday for advocating Soviet-Iranian cooperation against the US while Iraq attacks Iranian cities with Soviet-made missiles. 

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Iran's trial of military members of the Tudeh party has ended. The last eight defendants were convicted of espionage; all pleaded for mercy. The defendants will be sentenced Saturday. 

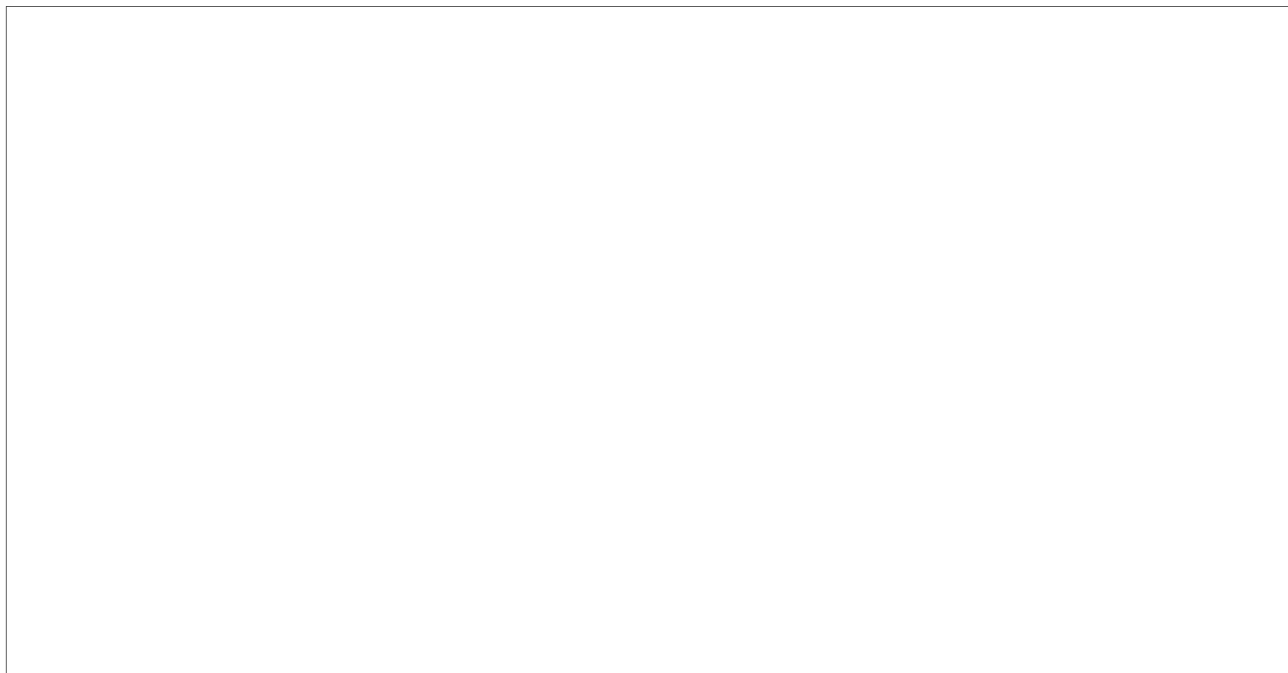
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-- We have no information on when trials of civilian Tudeh members will begin. The Tudeh trials have contributed to the worsening of relations between Iran and the Soviet Union. 

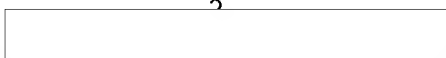
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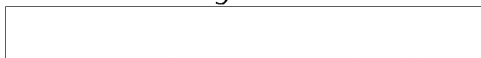
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